

Dear [OHP Member],

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has been working with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD) since late January to examine potential health risks associated with emissions of heavy metals, including arsenic, cadmium and chromium, from glass manufacturers in Southeast Portland and North Portland. The glass manufacturers, Bullseye Glass Co. and Uroboros Glass, have ended or suspended use of these metals in their glass-making processes.

Many people, particularly those in highest risk neighborhoods, have expressed concern about cancer risks due to these heavy metals in the air and soil. Testing blood or urine for arsenic or chromium is not likely to be useful, because these metals are eliminated from the body over a period of hours to days. Cadmium, however, is deposited in the kidneys and can be found in urine of persons who have been exposed over time. The Oregon Health Plan covers the cost of urine cadmium testing for those who live in the highest-risk areas of Southeast Portland and North Portland, but there are some things to consider as you think through the option of urine testing:

- Levels of cadmium identified at the sites have not been high enough to cause acute health problems.
- Chronic exposure to cadmium leads to build-up of the element in the kidneys, which if high enough can cause kidney damage; and it may elevate the risk for some cancers.
- OHA is not urging or recommending that you be tested for cadmium. This is a decision for you and your doctor to make in consultation.
- To date, more than 150 test results have been reported to the Oregon Health Authority. A fraction have any detectable cadmium, and just one results is a value above a threshold associated with kidney dysfunction. The vast majority of results are undetectable. This preliminary results are reassuring to experts.
- Your physician can order a test for cadmium and will then be able to discuss the results with you. Note that interpretation of cadmium results is not straightforward: most tests were designed to detect the higher levels of this metal due to high exposure in persons whose jobs require them to work directly with these metals, rather than the lower levels expected in residents who live nearby. Furthermore, detectable cadmium does not mean that kidney damage is likely, but a physician may decide that follow-up testing of kidney function is warranted.
- Testing is not urgent, because in persons with high exposures it can be detected in the urine for many years.
- Most private insurance plans will cover the cost of urine cadmium testing for persons living close to Bullseye or Uroboros glass companies.

If cadmium is detected in your urine, a public health investigator will follow up with you to ask you about your exposures to these facilities and about other potential exposures to cadmium.